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Op-ed	Forbes Magazine	June 9, 2020
Op-ed	The Miami Herald	June 9, 2020
Op-ed	The Hill	June 9, 2020
Josh Greenman	New York Daily News	June 9, 2020
Op-ed	The Boston Herald	June 9, 2020

## The Battle for Guyana

by Bart S. Fisher\*

A contested election held on March 2 in the South American nation of Guyana may be more important to the United States than meets the eye. At stake for the people of Guyana is the long awaited prosperity that could come from its newly acquired status as a major oil producing nation. At stake for the United States is having a stable ally in an unstable part of the world..

The current government is controlled by the APNU + AFC Coalition, which is seeking a second term, following a 2015 victory over the opposition left-wing People's Progressive Party (PPP). The PPP ruled Guyana from 1992 through 2015, and left behind a legacy of controversy. Moreover, the PPP has indicated, if it prevails in the current recount of March 2 election results, that it will renegotiate the existing oil exploration arrangement with Exxon. Chevron and Apache also have oil and gas holdings in Guyana. Punishment of U.S. investments would not be in the national interest of the United States.

During the PPP tenure the government had an anti-American, pro-Chinese point of view. The country had become a narco-state, with serious narcotics trafficking problems and rampant corruption. Portions of the government were, in essence, a criminal enterprise. Moreover, its current party leader from 1999 through 2011, Bharrat Jagdeo, developed a close relationship with former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and its current President Nicolas Maduro

We applaud the recent statement of the U.S. Ambassador to Guyana, Sarah-Ann Lynch, that the United States is entirely non-partisan about which party wins Guyana's 2020 election, and that she supports a transparent and credible recount process. She has underlined the importance of the current government's support of the Lima Group, which is striving for a democratic resolution to the crisis in Venezuela.

The election recount, which is scheduled to conclude on June 16, has uncovered serious election fraud on the part of the PPP. Among the claims of fraud are ballots cast for dead persons and persons who have migrated, persons voting without proper identification, large numbers of improperly stamped ballots, and missing poll books. These indicia of fraud indicate that the election was free but not fair.

After the recount is completed, the election commission will have decisions to make about how to adjudicate the problems that have been uncovered. In anticipation of this, the PPP

propaganda machine has been pressed into action in an attempt to label any such adjudication as illegitimate.

The international community needs to respect Guyana's sovereignty, and the United States needs to let the lawful election process proceed in an open and transparent manner. The United States did not appreciate foreign interference in its 2016 election, and should not interfere in Guyana's election. Let Guyana handle its electoral process. Let Guyana breathe.

Bart S. Fisher is a partner in JJ&B, which represents the APNU + AFC Coalition.